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**AGAIN NOT Q: LUKE 7: 18-35 AS AN ACTS-ORIENTATED TRANSFORMATION OF THE VINDICATION OF THE PROPHET MICAIAH (I KINGS 22:1-38)**

*T. Brodie*

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It has already been indicated elsewhere that two texts which are frequently attributed to Q (Luke 7:1-10 and 9:57-62) may in fact be explained more reliably as Luke's reworking of parts of the Elijah-Elisha narrative<sup>1</sup>.

The purpose of the present article is to indicate that the same is true for Luke's account of the relative roles of John and Jesus (Luke 7:18-35). Though often attributed to Q (it is found in Matt 11:2-19 and consists largely of Jesus' words)<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>1</sup> T. L. Brodie, 'Not Q but Elijah: The Saving of the Centurion's Servant (Luke 7:1-10) as an Internalization of the Saving of the Widow and her Child (1 Kgs 17:1-16),' *IBS* 14 (1992) 54-71; idem, 'Luke 9:57-62: A Systematic Adaptation of the Divine Challenge to Elijah (1 Kings 19),' *SBL Seminar Papers* 1989 (ed. D. J. Lull; Atlanta: Scholars, 1989) 237-45.

<sup>2</sup> As well as being regarded as coming from Q, Luke 7:18-35 is also regarded at times as reflecting early traditions and the historical Jesus; see, for instance, J. Lambrecht, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another? The Gospel Message of Jesus Today,' *LouvStud* 8 (1980) 115-28; W. Wink, 'Jesus' Reply to John. Matt 11:2-6/Luke 7:18-23,' *Forum* 5 (1989) 121-28; L. E. Vaage, 'Q and the Historical Jesus: Some Peculiar Sayings (7:33-34; 9:57-58, 59-60; 14:26-27),' *Forum* 5 (1989) 159-76. But other authors indicate the need for caution in attributing some of the sayings of Luke 7:18-35 to Jesus; see, for instance, W. J. Cotter, 'Children Sitting in the Agora. Q(Luke) 7:31-35,' *Forum* 5 (1989) 63-82.

For a comparison of Luke 7:18-35 with the Gospel of Thomas, and for a discussion of some of the rhetorical features of Luke's text, see R. Cameron, 'What Have You Come Out To See? Characterization of John and Jesus in the Gospels,' *Semeia* 49 (1990) 35-69.



this passage turns out to be a reworking of the account of the vindication of the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:1-38) - a text which falls within the Elijah-Elisha narrative.

To say that part of Luke 7 depends on the Elijah-Elisha narrative is not new. Earlier articles have shown not only that 7:1-10 depends on the Elijah-Elisha story but that the same is true for all the rest of Luke 7 (Luke 7:1-10 depends on 1 Kgs 17:1-16; Luke 7:11-17 on 1 Kgs 17:17-24; and Luke 7:36-50 on 2 Kgs 4:1-37)<sup>3</sup>. The dependence of Luke 7:18-35 on 1 Kings 22 is simply the last piece in the puzzle of Luke 7.

Given the other articles about Luke's sources in chap. 7, it does not seem necessary at this point to repeat all the preliminary arguments about Luke's practice - inspired partly by the rhetorical practice of *mimesis* (Latin, *imitatio*) - of deliberately and systematically reshaping texts from the Septuagint, especially from the Elijah-Elisha narrative<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> See, by T. L. Brodie, 'Not Q but Elijah,' 'Towards Unravelling Luke's Use of the Old Testament: Luke 7.11-17 as an *Imitatio* of 1 Kings 17.17-24,' *NTS* 32 (1986) 247-67; 'Luke 7,36-50 as an Internalization of 2 Kings 4,1-37: A Study in Luke's Use of Rhetorical Imitation,' *Bib* 64 (1983) 457-85

<sup>4</sup> On imitation in general, see G. C. Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace. A Study in the Classical Theory of Imitation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1920; reprinted, Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1971; G. N. Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer Hypomnemata* 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1964; T. M. Greene, *The Light in Troy. Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*, New Haven: Yale University, 1982. For summaries of imitation and Luke's use of it, especially in reworking the Elijah-Elisha narrative, see Brodie, 'Luke 7.11-17,' 247-48; 'Luke 7,36-50,' 459-66; 'Not Q but Elijah,' 55-56.

## The Texts: Introductory Analysis

### *1 Kings 22*

The story of Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:1-38) is an interlude - a shifting of the focus away from Elijah.

At first sight this interlude may seem to have little to do with the surrounding Elijah-centred material. It begins with Ahab's warlike ambition to wrest Ramoth-gilead from Aram (22:1-4), and ends with Ahab's death - killed by a chance arrow which pierces his disguise and his armour, and which, despite his effort at further disguise (he remains standing), drains his blood into his chariot (22:29-38).

But as often happens in biblical narrative, apparent interludes are integral to the story. The interlude concerning Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), for instance, is integral to the Joseph story<sup>5</sup>. Likewise, Ahab and Aramean wars are integral to the Elijah-Elisha narrative; in varying ways they are woven through large parts of it. Furthermore, the death of Ahab, when taken in conjunction with the death of his successor Amaziah (2 Kings 1), forms a foil for the fate of Elijah: struck by different accidents, the two kings sink down (one draining down into his bloodied chariot, the other falling from his balcony into his death bed), but Elijah is taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2)<sup>6</sup>. Besides, the essence of 1 Kings 22 is not about war but about prophecy and its fulfilment, and about the difference between true and false prophecy. Hence

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<sup>5</sup> R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981) 5-17.

<sup>6</sup> For some details on the role of Amaziah's fall and death (2 Kings 1) as foil for the ascent of Elijah (2 Kings 2) see T. L. Brodie, 'The Departure for Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56) as a Rhetorical Imitation of Elijah's Departure for the Jordan (2 Kgs 1,1-2,6),' *Bib* 70 (1989) 96-109, esp. 100-101.



Simon de Vries places this chapter under the heading *Prophet against Prophet*<sup>7</sup>.

The importance of prophecy is introduced by Jehoshaphat - the king of Judah, who accompanies Ahab, and who, unlike the disguised king of Israel, wears his royal robes. Jehoshaphat wants honesty, openness, and so when faced with all the false prophets who predict success, he insists on calling a true prophet, 'a prophet of the Lord.' So they send a messenger for Micaiah.

When Micaiah comes, he stands against the pressure of the royal court with its pliant prophets, and he announces dramatically and poetically that Israel will be scattered shepherdless - leaving God's word to bring them home.

In the event, Micaiah's prophetic word is vindicated.

#### *Luke 7:18-35: Aspects of Unity, Content and Structure*

The Lukan text (7:18-35) also is a form of interlude. The emphasis shifts from Jesus, the central character of the surrounding episodes, to John. But the passage has implications also for the larger character of Jesus; and most of the text consists of Jesus' words. Hence, while Luke imitates something of the OT effect of an interlude, the encompassing role of the larger character (which in the OT is enigmatically hidden) comes out more clearly.

The emphasis on John is one of the factors which brings out the unity of the text. In Talbert's words, the passage is 'held together by the focus on John'<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> *Prophet Against Prophet. The Role of the Micaiah Narrative in the Development of Early Prophetic Tradition*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978.

<sup>8</sup> C. H. Talbert, *Reading Luke. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1986) 84.

The full dimensions of the text's unity are complex and orderly. The passage falls into three parts<sup>9</sup>, and each part looks at an aspect of John - his question to the healer (7:18-23), his positive prophetic role (24-30), and the negative reaction to him (7:31-35). In simplified terms, therefore, the entire text deals with wondrous healings, positive speaking, and negative reactions.

Apart from dealing with John, these three parts share a further and deeper unity: each contains some element of division or confrontation, and together they portray an overall movement from harmony to a divisive confrontation which is intensifying.

At first (in 7:18-23) the division or confrontation is scarcely perceptible; in fact it is mentioned as something which hopefully will not occur (7:23, 'And blessed is the one who is not scandalised in me').

Then, in the positive address (7:24-30), it emerges clearly - but only in the closing verses which contrast the receptive people and tax-collectors with the rejection which comes from the Pharisees and lawyers (7:29-30).

Finally, in the account of the negative reactions (7:31-35), the sense of confrontation is uppermost.

The sense of increasing confrontation or division governs not only the content but also the form. The allusion to scandal at the end of the first part (7:23) contains a mild break in style; it is a beatitude ('And blessed are they...'), and as such involves a change in form, but - in a feature which is very rare in a beatitude<sup>10</sup> - it is tied to what precedes by 'and' ('And blessed...'); the gap is bridged. Thus content and form correspond: the scandal is something which hopefully will not

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<sup>9</sup> See esp. J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I-IX* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981) 662. Note also R. J. Karris, 'The Gospel According to Luke,' *NJBC* 43:96-98.

<sup>10</sup> Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 668.



happen, and the break in style is something which is bridged. Division is evoked but avoided.

At the end of the second part, however, 'the Greek text is a bit awkward'<sup>11</sup> and the break is quite clear: the last two verses ('And all the people hearing...', 7:29-30) are so out of joint with what precedes that translators sometimes place them in a separate paragraph (NEB) or in parenthesis (RSV).

In the third part (7:31-35), when virtually the whole text deals with some form of rejection, division or confrontation, the disjuncture is equally great - it effects not just the final verse(s) but the whole text; the whole text breaks away to some degree from the preceding parts (from 7:18-30) - causing the UBSGNT to put in its only paragraph division in 7:18-35, and the Jerusalem Bible its only new heading.

Yet division is not the last word. Despite increasing confrontation Luke's central emphasis is positive. Not only is the initial allusion to scandal covered over as it were by a beatitude (7:23), but the second picture of division contains the picture of all the people and the tax-collectors as glorifying/justifying (δικαίωω) God (7:29-30). And even the final section closes with a similar positive idea - 'wisdom is vindicated/justified (δικαίωω) by all her children' (7:35)<sup>12</sup>.

Luke's text (7:18-35), therefore, is a well-constructed three part whole in which even the disjunctures contribute to the overall unity - to a picture which advances from healing and positive speaking to increasing dividedness. It is a picture which, despite its negativity, ultimately vindicates God and God's wisdom.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 675.

<sup>12</sup> On the role of δικαίωω in Luke 7:29,35, see esp. Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 84-85.

*Luke 7:18-35: Continuity with Luke-Acts*

While Luke 7:18-35 has its own distinctness, it is so written that it is in narrative continuity with the larger narrative of Luke-Acts. It builds on what precedes and, above all, it prepares for what lies ahead.

It forms a unity, first of all, with the rest of chap. 7. On the one hand, it looks back to Luke 7:1-17. Its opening verse refers to what has preceded ('all these things,' 7:11), and, like the first verse of the preceding episode, it uses the phrase οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ, 'his disciples' (7:18; cf. 7:11). More substantively, the initial emphasis in Luke 7:18-35, concerning many wondrous healings, including the raising of the dead (7:21-22), is like an expansion or intensification of the accounts of the healing of the centurion's servant (7:1-10) and the raising of the widow's son (7:11-17). Luke 7:18-35 also continues the climactic idea of the prophet being accepted by all the people (7:26,29; cf. 7:16).

On the other hand, Luke 7:18-35 looks forward and prepares for the subsequent part of chap. 7. The sense of scandal and of division, especially division or contrast between the sinners (tax-collectors) and the Pharisees (7:23,29-30), establishes the broad background for the scandal of Simon the Pharisee and for the contrast between that Pharisee and the forgiven woman (7:36-50, esp. 7:39,44-46)<sup>13</sup>. And the broad idea of the rejection of the prophet (7:31-34) is likewise illustrated in Simon (7:39,44-46).

As well as being in close knit unity with the rest of the chapter, Luke 7:18-35 is also in continuity with much of Luke-Acts.

Continuity with what precedes chap. 7 is found, for instance, in the following:

<sup>13</sup> For further details of this continuity, see Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 84-85.



- The implication of someone coming (7:19; cf. 3:16).
- The sense of waiting or expecting (7:19-20; cf. 3:15).
- The Isaian healings (7:21-22; cf. 4:17-18; Isa 61:1)<sup>14</sup>.
- The desert (7:24; cf. 1:80; 3:2).
- Sending of an angel; birth; women; kingdom (7:27-28; cf. 1:26-27,31,33,42).
- All the people being baptised (7:29; cf. 3:21).
- John's abstention from wine (7:33; cf. 1:15).

The continuity of 7:18-35 with what follows Luke 7 is focused largely on Acts. The picture of Jesus speaking, including the reference to the unresponsive Jewish authorities (Pharisees and lawyers; cf. 'this generation'), prepares the way for much that happens in Acts, especially for the speeches of Peter.

The idea that part of Luke 7 should be a preparation for Acts finds initial backing in the very first episode of that chapter: the picture of the centurion and Jesus (Luke 7:1-10) prepares the way for the picture of Cornelius and Peter (Acts 10).

Furthermore, the broad three part sweep of Luke 7:18-35 (*wonders/healings*, followed first by *positive witness* and then by an *increasing sense of confrontation*) corresponds to the broad patterns of Peter's activities, especially in Acts 2-5. The first such pattern, with great emphasis on the miraculous and virtually no confrontation (except a final ominous reference to 'this perverse generation,' 2:40), occurs in Acts 2. The second, with more obvious confrontation, is in Acts 3:1-

<sup>14</sup>

On the close relationship of the healings in Luke 7:21-22 to those in Isa 61:1, see Fitzmyer, *Luke I-IX*, 668, and esp. R. C. Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts. A Literary Interpretation. Vol 1: The Gospel According to Luke* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 78-80.

4:22. And the third, in which confrontation becomes acute, is in Acts 4:23-5:42<sup>15</sup>.

In addition, there are more detailed links, among them the following:

- 'And they announced' (καὶ ἀπήγγειλαν) (7:18; Acts 4:23).
- Calling (προσκαλέω)...disciples (7:18; Acts 2:39; 5:40).
- Waiting/expecting (προσδοκάω) (7:19; Acts 3:4).
- Coming/arriving (παράγονόμενοι) (7:20; Acts 5:21,22,25).
- Hour (7:21; Acts 2:15; 3:1; 5:7).

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<sup>15</sup> A full analysis of the relationship of Luke 7:18-35 to Acts 2-5 would be disproportionate in an article which is primarily focused on the relationship with 1 Kings 22, but certain aspects may be noted briefly.

Luke 7:18-35 and Acts 2 share some basic features:

(A) An initial emphasis on wonders/miracles (Luke 7:18-23; Acts 2:1-20; with just a suggestion of scandal or scepticism, Luke 7:23; Acts 2:13).

(B) Positive testimony (to John and Jesus, Luke 7:24-28; to Jesus, Acts 2:22-36), and people's reactions (divided in Luke [7:29-30]; united in Acts [2:37-41] but with a reference to 'this perverse generation').

(C) The question of unity: contrasting pictures of division (Luke 7:31-35) and harmony (Acts 2:42-47).

In the case of Acts 3:1-4:22 there is a more obvious sense of division. The text again starts with a miracle (Acts 3:1-10), but instead of one harmonious speech and response, there are two speeches and there two responses, interwoven but diverse - one involving the people (Acts 3:11-26; 4:21-22), the other the authorities (4:1-20).

In Acts 4:23-chap. 5 the initial emphasis is again on something wondrous (the place shakes, 4:23-31) and later there are many more wonders and healings (4:12-16). But the sense of division is much greater; it is intimated earlier, even amid the different wonders, on a matter of property (4:32-5:11). And eventually, when the apostles are arrested and beaten, and when Peter's speech becomes curt and short, this sense of division becomes explosive (5:17-42).



- Multiple healings (7:21-22; Acts 5:12-16).
- The lame walk (7:22; Acts 3:1-9).
- This is what is written/said (in scripture) (7:27; Acts 2:16).
- The kingdom of God (7:28; Acts 1:3,6).
- 'All the people' (πᾶς ὁ λαός)(7:29; Acts 3:9,11).
- Hearing and being baptised (7:29; Acts 2:37,38,41).
- Contrast between people and authorities (7:29-30; Acts 5:26).
- God's plan (βουλή.....θεοῦ)(7:30; Acts 2:23; 5:38-39).
- 'This (perverse) generation' (7:31; Acts 2:40).
- All her children (7:35; Acts 2:39, '...your children and all...').

While the significance of some details is questionable, the overall conclusion is reasonably clear: one aspect of the language of Luke 7:18-35 is its continuity with Acts 2-5.

Thus there is a triple affinity between Luke 7:18-35 and Acts 2-5: in content (wonders; positive witness; negative division/ confrontation - amid God's plan), in structure (threefold, intensifying), and in language. The John-related text (7:18-35) is a capsule form of what is to follow in Acts.

This kinship with Acts 2-5 casts light on a further feature of Luke 7:18-35, namely its general similarity to a speech or sermon. Acts 2-5 is heavily coloured by the speeches of Peter, and it is appropriate that Luke 7:18-35, in foreshadowing Peter's speeches, should itself consist largely of speechlike material. This speechlike or sermonlike quality has tended to reinforce the impression that Luke 7:18-35 comes from Q, but the relationship with Acts 2-5 provides a less conjectural explanation of that quality.

### *Luke 7:18-35: Relationship with 1 Kgs 22:1-38*

However great the continuity of Luke 7:18-35 with Luke-Acts, it has its own distinctness, and this distinctness has

its own sources. (The centurion story [Luke 7:1-10], for instance, despite its continuity with Acts 10, depends significantly on 1 Kgs 17:1-16). One of the distinctive sources of Luke 7:18-35 is the story of Micaiah.

The central link between Luke 7:18-35 and 1 Kgs 22:1-38 is again the idea of confrontation - the idea highlighted in De Vries's title *Prophet Against Prophet*. The confrontation is that which results from God's word, and which, despite rejection by some, is vindicated.

Thus, in order to build a text which in multiple ways will prepare for an account of God's word issuing in confrontation (Acts 2-5), Luke draws on an OT text which dealt with that very topic.

As with other texts from the Elijah-Elisha narrative, Luke has left aside the ancient setting (in this case a war) and has given a modernised christianised version which places greater emphasis on what is positive and internal.

Instead of showing, for instance, how the falsifying of God's word leads to violence (exemplified in the false prophet Zedekiah), he shows the other, positive, side of the coin - how God's true word/revelation brings peaceful healing (as seen in Jesus). Correspondingly, the picture of going forth to war is replaced by the picture of going out into the desert.

The shift to what is more internal, closer to the human heart, is reflected sharply in one dramatic adaptation. Instead of tracing the roots of perversity to a distant drama in the high heavens (the heavenly host talking back and forth, 2 Kgs 22:19b-23), Luke pictures this perversity as if it were coming from ordinary life, implicitly from an internal disposition - the unresponsiveness which is reflected in the children calling to each other in the marketplace (Luke 7:31-32). Thus Luke has changed a perversity which originates in the highest heavens to one which emanates from the lowliest human arena.



Both texts (1 Kgs 22:1-38 and Luke 7:18-35) contain one declaration which is particularly prophetic and poetic - Micaiah's vision of scattered Israel being sent home in peace by God's word (1 Kgs 22:17), and Jesus' description (taken from Mal 3:1) of John as God's angel who prepares the way (Luke 7:27). In each case, God helps people on their way, but Luke uses a picture which plays down the negative (the scattering) and which contributes to his emphasis on the fulfilling of scripture. (The uniqueness of these texts within their respective contexts is highlighted in the Jerusalem Bible - in the poetic layout).

The overall relationship between 1 Kgs 22:1-38 and Luke 7:18-35 is summarised in the accompanying outline. (cf. page 14) Generally Luke follows the order of the OT texts but on two occasions he combines<sup>16</sup> texts which are inherently related - the three texts which in various ways flow from Zedekiah's violence (22:10-14,24-25,34-35), and two texts about going to war (Micaiah's make-believe recommendation to go, and the actual going, 22:15,29-33).

Furthermore, Luke has relocated the final scene of the washing so that it is the conclusion not of the entire passage but simply of its second part (7:29-30 - concluding 7:24-30). (Variations on such relocating of concluding verses occur also in other parts of Luke)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> For another example of Luke's combining or fusing of related texts, see Brodie, 'Luke 7,36-50,' 476-77.

<sup>17</sup> In reworking 2 Kgs 1:1-2:6 and 2 Kings 5, Luke transposes some of the concluding verses to a much earlier position in his own text; see Brodie, 'Luke 9:51-56,' 101; and, 'Towards Unravelling the Rhetorical Imitation of Sources in Acts: 2 Kgs 5 as One Component of Acts 8,9-40,' *Bib* 67 (1986) 41-67, esp. 48.

Questioning the Lord, Repetitiously

Refrain: ask the Lord  
( κυριον).

Two questions:

Do I go or (ἤ) hold back? Is there a  
prophet of the Lord? (22:1-9)?

John sends to the Lord  
(κυριον).

One complex question, twice:

Are you the one [prophet?] to  
come or (ἤ) do we wait for  
another? (7:18-20).

Fruits of False Prophecy and True: Violence and Healing

Zedekiah prophesied goring

Micaiah: I tell what God says.

Zedekiah hit, and the king was hit,  
in that day (22:10-14,24-25,34-  
35).

In that hour:

Healing...and granting sight.

Tell what you have seen.

Healing, the blind see...(7:21-  
23).

Going Forth: The Pliant Prophet and the Courtly Clothing

When Micaiah comes:

Should I go up/forth...?

Micaiah is pliant: Go up/forth.

And the kings went up  
one in royal clothing (22:15,29-  
33).

When the messengers go:

What did you go out...?

A reed shaken by the wind?

A man in fine clothing? Such  
are in royal courts (7:24-25).



## Brodie, **Again not Q**, *IBS* 16, January 1994

### True Prophecy - About God Guiding People on Their Way

Micaiah speaks as a real prophet  
in the name of the Lord,

I have seen

Israel scattered, shepherdless

And God said 'Let each go  
home'

Did I not tell...Hear the word  
(22:16-19a).

A prophet, more than a prophet  
it is written,

Behold

I send my angel before you  
to prepare your way  
before you

I say to you  
Pronouncement on John (7:26-  
28).

God's word fulfilled  
in baptising...baptising  
(7:29-30).

### Sitting and Talking to One Another (Images from Complementary Worlds)

God sitting in the heavenly court:  
some say this and some say that  
(22:19b-23).

Children sitting in the  
marketplace,  
calling to one another  
(7:31-32).

### Eating, Drinking, Rejection - and Vindication

Micaiah's rejection;  
his eating and drinking.  
God's word will be vindicated.  
(22:26-28).

John, Jesus, eating and  
drinking;  
both rejected.  
Wisdom is justified/vindicated.  
(7:33-35).

God's word fulfilled  
in washing...washing (22:36-38).

Detailed Analysis

1. *Questioning the Lord, Repetitiously* (1 Kgs 22:1-9; Lk 7:18-20)

In the first scene the two kings express their readiness to conquer Romoth-gilead, thus expanding the kingdom of Israel. But before embarking on this expansion they decide to 'ask the Lord (τὸν κύριον).' First the king of Israel asked the assembled prophets, 'Should I go to war...or refrain?' and, when the answer was a glib yes, the other king asked, 'Is there here no prophet of the Lord?' Then, after these two questions, they decide to call Micaiah.

The context in Luke is also one of expansion - not military but evangelical: the previous episode had concluded by telling that 'this word,' concerning 'a great prophet,' went out to all of Judaea 'and all the surrounding territory' (Luke 7:16-17). And it is precisely within this context that John calls two disciples and sends them to 'the Lord' (τὸν κύριον) to ask, 'Are you the one who is coming or should we wait for another?'

The meaning of 'the one who is coming' is unclear. On the one hand, it is in continuation with the coming one announced earlier by John (in Luke 3:16). On the other, in a tension that is typical of Luke's expanding text - a text full of the dynamics of prophecy and fulfilment - it builds on the preceding explicit reference to Jesus as a great prophet (7:16,18), it has affinities with the idea of the prophet-like-Moses (Deut 18:18; cf. John 6:14), and it leads into the account of healings which imply the coming of the eschatological prophet<sup>18</sup>. In other words, the messengers'

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<sup>18</sup> See I. H. Marshall, *Commentary on Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 292: 'The combination of OT allusions indicates that the future era of salvation has arrived, but this is

question may have started with a fairly narrow presupposition about the one to come, but, like prophecy leading to something fuller, it opens the way to a greater reality - to the presence of the eschatological prophet. Thus, like the kings' messenger, but much more so, John's two disciples are on their way to a true prophet from God.

The affinities between the texts may be outlined thus,	
Context: Israel's Expansion	Context: spread of the word.
	Calls (προσκαλέω) two disciples;
Refrain: ask the Lord (κύριον)	sends them to the Lord (κύριον)
Two questions:	One complex question, repeated:
Do I go or (ἤ) hold back?	Are you the coming one[prophet?]
Is there a prophet of the Lord?	or (ἤ) do we wait for another?
Call (καλέω) Micaiah.	

The affinities involve four areas - substance, action (plot), form, and detail. The substantive link is the quest for the true prophet of God. As it happens, in both texts this quest occurs in a context which in different ways suggests an imminent expansion of God's kingdom - the ancient kingdom of Israel and the gospel kingdom of the word - and this situation of expansion or movement generates a sense of uncertainty about what to do, about whether to go with the momentum or hold back.

The actions or plots are very different at one level - the OT action is set in war and the other in profound peace - yet

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especially linked with the function of Jesus as the eschatological prophet.'



they involve a fundamental similarity: the one who, amid his followers, is hesitating, decides to call ([προσ]καλέω) (a) messenger(s) and to send him/them to the person who apparently is the true prophet of the Lord.

There are links also in form. Both texts use questions - questions which are specifically either/or in nature - and both use repetition. The OT has a repetitive refrain about asking the Lord (1 Kgs 22:5,7,8) and it also has two questions. Luke has a single question, but it is asked twice, repetitively - a repetitive pattern which 'gives the words a distinct rhythm'<sup>19</sup>.

Finally, there is a curious link in detail, the OT reference to asking 'the Lord' helps explain the rather surprising reference to Jesus as 'the Lord' (Luke 7:19).

But while thus maintaining manifold continuity with the OT text, Luke has also made important adaptations. As so often in his reworking of the OT, he has shifted the emphasis from an external drama, an external kingdom and its wars, to a world in which the focus falls more clearly on what is positive and more internal (the kingdom inaugurated by Jesus).

Furthermore, despite omitting many dramatic elements - the armies and wars - he manages not only to build a drama of his own but to do so in a way which is vivid and memorable. (He achieves this in large part through the single striking question, which, for greater effect is repeated).

In addition, he has adapted the whole both to the general tradition of Jesus and in particular to the requirements of his own narrative. The sending of two messengers, for instance, rather than one, involves an adaptation to a general pattern in Luke-Acts (cf. Luke 10:1; 22:8; Acts 3:11; 8:14). And the designation of these messengers as 'his disciples' likewise accords with one of Luke's larger patterns (as seen,

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<sup>19</sup> Tannehill, *Luke-Acts. Vol. 1*, 79; see H. Schürmann, *Das Lukasevangelium: Erster Teil: Kommentar zu Kap. 1,1-9,50* (HTKNT 3/1; Freiburg 1969) 411.

for instance, in the preceding episode, 7:11). Even the key word προσ-δοκάω, 'wait,' while it contains a close echo of the OT idea of refraining/holding back (1 Kgs 22:6), fits in also with other Lukan episodes (Luke 3:15; Acts 3:5).

2. *The Fruits of False Prophecy and True: Violence and Healing (1 Kgs 22:10-14,24-25,34-35; Luke 7:21-23)*

Both texts now move from the messenger(s) to a scene of prophecy - in the OT to the prophets Zedekiah and Micaiah, and in Luke, to the eschatological prophet.

The OT text begins with violence: the false prophet Zedekiah uses iron horns to symbolise the goading of the Syrians until they are finished (1 Kgs 22:10-12), and then - following an interlude in which the focus switches to the messenger and in which Micaiah says that he will tell what (ἃ) the Lord says (1 Kgs 22:13-14) - the picture comes back later to intensified Zedekiah-related violence: Zedekiah's hitting (ἐπάταξεν) of Micaiah and the enemy's hitting (ἐπάταξεν) of the king (22:24-25,34-35).

Luke's scene begins not with violence but with peace (the picture of peaceful healing, 7:21), and then - following an interlude in which the focus switches to the messengers and in which they are told to tell what (ἃ) they have seen [the Lord doing] (7:21a) - the picture returns to being one of further, intensified, healing (7:22-23).

Thus instead of moving from violence to intensified violence, Luke moves from peace (healings) to intensified peace. In doing this he combines the three violent scenes of the OT text, and in giving a NT equivalent (an opposite) he seeks, as with the questions in the previous scene, a greater sense of repetition. In approximate outline:

In that hour:

*Zedekiah prophecies goading.      Peaceful healing.*

The messenger goes.

The messengers are told to go.

Micaiah, I tell what God says.

Tell what you have seen/heard:

*Zedekiah hit; king is hit,*  
in that day.

*Further peaceful healing.*

Here as earlier there are multiple links. The substantive issue is the nature and testing of prophecy. The OT shows the violent bankruptcy of prophecy which is false. Luke, with an eye to Acts 2-5, shows the other side of the same coin - the peaceful and healing nature of prophecy which is true.

Furthermore, despite the adaptation from war to peace, there is continuity also in the actions and form: a picture of dramatic activity (concerning wounding/healing) first gives way to an image of the journeying messenger(s) and later switches back to a more intense version of the same activity.

Finally, in the timing (of war, 1 Kgs 22:25,35; of peace, Luke 7:21), and in the one activity which is shared, that of speaking to the journeying messengers (1 Kgs 22:13a,14; Luke 7:22a) there are links of detail:

OT: καὶ ὁ ἄγγελος ὁ πορευθεὶς...(13a)

καὶ εἶπεν...ᾧ (14)

τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ...ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (25,35)

NT: ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ὥρᾳ

καὶ...εἶπεν...πορευθέντες ἀπαγγείλατε...ᾧ (22a)

OT: And the messenger who was going...

And he said...whatever [the Lord tells]  
that day...in that day

NT: In that hour

And...he said...Go tell...whatever [you see the Lord doing]



Luke's use of 'hour' (rather than 'day') helps to prepare the way for the emphasis on 'hour' in Acts (2:15; 3:1; 5:7).

3. *Going Up/Out: The Pliant Prophet and the Courtly Clothing* (1 Kgs 22:15,29-33; Luke 7:24-25)

When Micaiah first arrives (ἔρχομαι) and the king asks his question, Micaiah plays the role advised by the messenger - that of the pliant court prophet: he tells the king to go up, to go forth to war (1 Kgs 22:15).

In Luke too, as the messengers go (ἀπέρχομαι), there is a question about going forth - not up (to war) but out (to the desert). And there is also the image of the pliant prophet - the reed shaken by the wind.

In other words, the pliant prophet who says to go forth (OT) has been replaced by going forth to see the pliant prophet (NT).

When, subsequently, the king of Judah does go forth, he goes very explicitly, in royal clothing (1 Kgs 22:29-33). And Luke immediately speaks of going forth to see someone in fine clothing - clothing found in royal courts (Luke 7:25).

Thus where the OT had spoken repeatedly of going forth to a war, Luke speaks repeatedly of going forth to a scene of peace - the desert.

Again Luke has combined related texts. The two images of going forth, though separated in 1 Kings 22 (22:15,29-33), have been distilled and brought together in the NT.

And once again, as in the two previous episodes, Luke builds repetitively and memorably: instead of a question about going forth and a statement about going forth, he gives two similar questions ('What did you go out...to see?...But what did you go out to see?').

There are also links of detail:

OT: [Opening words] καὶ ἦλθεν...(15)

εἰ ἀναβῶ εἰς...πόλεμον (15)

καὶ ἀνέβη...εἰς...εἰς τὸν... (29-30)

βασιλεὺς....πρὸς....βασιλέα....καὶ σὺ ἔνδυσαι τὸν  
ἱματισμόν. (30)

NT: [Opening word] ἀπελθόντων...(24)

τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον...(24)

τί ἐξήλθατε ...(25)

ἄνθρωπον..ἡμφιεσμένον..ἐν..ἱματισμῷ..ἐν..βασιλείοις  
(25)

OT: [Opening words] And he came...

Will I go up to...war?

And the king...the king...went up to...to the...to the

King...to...king, You wear your robes

NT: [Opening word] As-they-were-going...

What did you go out to the desert...?

But what did you go out...?

A man clothed in robes...in kings' courts

The word ἱματισμός, 'clothing/apparel/robes,' is relatively rare (32 times in the OT, 5 in the NT). Rarer still is the explicit reference to an inherent link between wearing ἱματισμός, and being kings or in kings' courts. Apart from the parallel text in 2 Chr 18:29 and two debatable Solomon-related

texts (1 Kgs 10:5,25 [parr. 2 Chr 9:4,24]), the nearest one comes to it is in the royal wedding song (Ps 44[45]:8-12).

4. *The True Prophet Reveals God's Voice Showing the Way (1 Kgs 22:16-19a; Luke 7:26-28)*

The king now tells Micaiah to stop playing the pliant prophet and to speak the truth in the name of the Lord - in other words, to speak as a real prophet (1 Kgs 22:16). And Luke in turn switches from the image of someone pliant and soft to that of 'a prophet and more than a prophet' (7:26).

Then come two pictures of true prophets - the text's description of Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:17) and Jesus' description of John (Luke 7:27).

They begin by implying that the true prophet is based on God. Micaiah speaks 'the truth *in the name of God*.' And John is foretold in God's written word (he is 'the one of whom *it is written*'). Thus Luke keeps the sense of someone who is grounded in God, but he expresses that groundedness through one of his favourite patterns - emphasis on the fulfilment of scripture.

Then come the key texts. Micaiah has a vision of Israel being scattered and of God intervening to say that they should be allowed to '*go home in peace*' (1 Kgs 22:17). John's role also (two balanced repetitive phrases, quoted from Mal 3:1) implies that God helps people on a journey: John is God's 'messenger...who *prepares the way*...' (Luke 7:27). Thus in different ways both prophets communicate the message about God helping people find their way, but Luke omits the negative emphasis on scattering and adapts the idea of God guiding people to his pattern concerning the fulfilling of scripture.

Luke's text then gives a pivotal pronouncement about John: he is greater than all yet less than anyone in the kingdom of God (7:28). However, apart perhaps from the introductory 'I say to you' (7:28a; cf. 1 Kgs 22:18-19a, 'Did I not say to



you...?' 'Hear the word...'), this pronouncement does not seem to reflect 1 Kings 22. Apparently it comes from some other source or inspiration.

The most important links between these texts are the sudden emergence of the picture of a true prophet and the consequent picture of God as intervening to help people on their way. But there is also a very distinctive link in the form of the texts - in the way the poetic prophetic statements stand out.

*5. God's Word Fulfilled in the Washing/Baptising (1 Kgs 22:36-38; Luke 7:29-30)*

Having inserted the pivotal pronouncement about John's status, Luke now makes a radical adaptation. He takes the final OT scene, about the washing of the blood-stained chariot and the harlots washing in the blood-stained pool, and uses it as a starting-point for speaking about another kind of washing - baptism, the washing which was accepted by all the people and the tax-collectors but not by the Pharisees and lawyers.

In both texts the image of washing is used twice. In the OT 'they washed (ἀπέπλυναν) the chariot' and 'the harlots washed' (ἐλούσαντο)(1 Kgs 22:38). In the NT 'all the people and tax-collectors justified God, having being baptised (βαπτισθέντες) with John's baptism, but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected God's plan for them, not having been baptised (μὴ βαπτισθέντες) by him.' Once again, while adapting his source, Luke forges a text which is clearly repetitive.

What is central to these texts is not just the repeated image of material washing but the fact that this washing fulfils the word or plan of God. The OT washing happened 'in accordance with the word that the Lord had spoken' (1 Kgs

22:38). And the NT washing 'justified God,' in other words, vindicated<sup>20</sup> God.

Luke, however, has adapted the two washing references to form a contrast - thus preparing the way for later contrasts, including that between the two thieves (Luke 24:39-43) and especially the contrast in Acts between the people, who accepted baptism, and the Jewish authorities, who were in friction with God's plan (Acts 2:37-42; 4:1-4; 5:21,26,38).

In different ways both texts are final or have something of a closing role. This is clear in the OT; the washing closes the basic story. But even in Luke, where the larger passage will continue as far as 7:35, some authors and editors (though not all) regard the contrast between those who accepted baptism and those who did not as an interim conclusion<sup>21</sup>.

In any case, the essential link is that of a process of washing which, whatever its limitations, fulfils God's word or plan.

There are also some linking details. There is a correspondence between the OT text's opening picture of the army's *herald telling everyone go home* (1 Kgs 22:36) and Luke's opening reference to *all the people hearing* (7:29); these two pictures may perhaps be two sides of the same coin. More precisely, the repeated phrase εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ... εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ... ('to his own...to his own...', 1 Kgs 22:36) helps explain the perplexing phrase εἰς ἑαυτοὺς ('for themselves'? Luke 7:30). Luke's curious wording is sometimes regarded as reflecting Aramaic<sup>22</sup>, but, as often in Luke, it seems best to see

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<sup>20</sup> On δικαιόω as meaning 'to vindicate', see Talbert, *Reading Luke*, 84.

<sup>21</sup> UBSGNT; Jerusalem Bible; Fitzmyer, *Luke I-LX*, 670.

<sup>22</sup> Marshall, *Luke*, 299.

is wording not as a semitism but as a Septuagintism - one which, as occurs occasionally, involves a form of word play<sup>23</sup>.

*6. Sitting and Speaking Back and Forth to Each Other: Israel's Failure Explained in Images from Opposite Worlds - from God's Heavenly Court (1 Kgs 22:19b-23) and from the Human Playground (Luke 7:31-32)*

Having spoken of Israel's failure, its defeat, Micaiah goes on to give the root of that failure, and he places the root in God - in a decision taken in the heavenly court to use lying prophets to deceive Israel's king (1 Kgs 22:19b-22).

Luke, however, in looking for some parable to explain the failure or fall of the later Israel (the Jewish refusal of the gospel) places the root not in God but in the human will - in a stubbornness which is exemplified on a children's playground (in the way the children refuse to respond to what is called, 7:31-32).

Theologically, failure and evil can be attributed either to some factor outside human control, a factor which

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<sup>23</sup>

For other instances in which Luke plays with the wording of his OT source, see Brodie, 'Luke 7,36-50,' 473; idem, 'Acts 8,9-40,' 61.

The full details of the relationship between the washing texts (1 Kgs 22:36-38; Luke 7:31-32) seem to be extremely intricate, and eventually could deserve an article to themselves. There are two main dynamics that need to be unravelled - the transforming of the images (into NT equivalents); and the rearrangement (and duplication) of the elements to suit Luke's repetitive pattern.

The question of the transforming of the images can scarcely be worked out without first knowing what the OT images meant in themselves, particularly the images of the king dying and the dogs lapping (1 Kgs 22:37-38). The reference to the king dying, for instance, may appear to be a simple cold fact of history, but if it is part of an artistic counterbalance to Elijah's ascent then it belongs to a whole other world of meaning.



ultimately touches God, or it can be attributed to human factors. The OT gives one view and Luke gives the other. Again Luke has given the other side of the coin, and again he places the emphasis on a factor that is more internal, closer to the human makeup.

The two scenes - the heavenly court and the children's playground - have a fundamental similarity. The heavenly court is a *chorus-contra-chorum* arrangement, with God 'sitting' (καθήμενον) on the throne and all the heavenly host ranged to God's left and right. And in that situation 'one said one thing and another said another' (1 Kgs 22:20). In the marketplace the children are 'sitting' (καθημένοις) and calling to one another.'

Obviously the children's song ('We played...We wailed...') has its own sources and resonances<sup>24</sup>, quite independently of I Kings 22.

Yet Luke manages to echo something of the details of the heavenly conversation. In inquiring about how to bring down Israel's king (22:20-21), God had asked two questions (one fairly long, one short): 'Who...?' and 'By what...?' (Τίς...Ἐν τίνι...). And when Jesus is wondering how to describe the later Israel's failure, he introduces his parable by asking two questions (one relatively long, one short): 'To what...?' and 'To what...?' ( τίνι...τίνι, ..). As ever, Luke manages, even in such minuscule echoes, to build more precise repetition<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> For an interpretation of the children sitting in the marketplace as implying a court scene - an adult process of judgement - see W. J. Cotter, 'The Parable of the Children in the Marketplace, Q(Lk) 7:31-35: an Examination of the Parable's Image and Significance,' *NovTest* 29 (1987) 289-304.

<sup>25</sup> The indebtedness of Luke's introductory formula, τίνι...τίνι, to the Τίς...ἐν τίνι of 1 Kgs 22:20-21 does not rule out further indebtedness to other sources, such as those reflected in the rabbinical use of τίνι...τίνι, (cf. Str-B, 2.8).

*7. The Food-and-Drink Implications of Speaking God's Word:  
A Picture of Rejection and Vindication (1 Kgs 22:26-28; Luke  
7:33-35)*

When Micaiah's word is rejected he is imprisoned by two men and has to 'eat the bread (ἐσθίειν...ἄρτον) of affliction and the water of affliction.' Yet Micaiah's final statement is that God's word to him will be vindicated ('If you return...the Lord has not spoken through me').

Luke describes the eating and drinking habits of both John and Jesus: 'John...came neither eating bread (ἐσθίων...ἄρτον) nor drinking wine...The Son of Man came eating and drinking...' And both were rejected. Yet Luke's final statement is that wisdom is vindicated.

Again Luke has used repetition. He has taken the account of the eating and drinking of Micaiah and applied it in varied but repetitive ways to both John and Jesus. In the case of John, for instance, the idea of drinking is adapted to the angel's message that John would not drink wine (Luke 1:15).

In both cases (1 Kgs 22:26-28; Luke 7:33-35) this eating and drinking is linked with the speaking of the word of God and with rejection.

Furthermore, in both cases the final statement is of vindication: God's prophetic word to Micaiah will be shown to have been true (1 Kgs 22:28), and wisdom will be justified by 'all her children' (Luke 7:35). In concluding this speech Luke is following Micaiah's final statement about the vindication of God's word, but he is also preparing for the conclusion of Peter's speech - about the fulfilment of God's word/promise to 'your children and to all...' (Acts 2:39). Thus, in a single brief phrase, about vindication and all the children, he has managed to dovetail the closing words of both Micaiah and Peter.

## Conclusion

As always in comparing Luke with an OT text, some links are debatable or inadequately analysed, and insistence on such weak links, whether by someone proposing literary dependence or someone opposing it, tends to obscure the key issue: are there links which are strong, links which go beyond the range of coincidence? If something is to be proved in court, for instance, it is often not necessary or advisable to insist on every piece of evidence, strong or weak. All one needs are a few arguments or pieces of evidence which are sufficiently strong. Even one may sometimes be sufficient.

In the case of Luke 7:18-35 and 1 Kgs 22:1-38 there are a few arguments which are strong:

1. *The Context*. Everything else in Luke 7 depends on the Elijah-Elisha narrative. Given the unity of the chapter, this creates a situation where there is some likelihood that the same is true of Luke 7:18-35. In fact the context is such that the burden of proof begins to shift towards someone who wants to hold otherwise.

2. *The Manifold Similarities*. The similarities begin with the central theme of confrontation (based on God's vindicated revelation) and then continue through a wide range of links - from the content and order of the various parts to the persistent presence of small similarities of detail.

3. *The Coherence of the Differences*. Though the differences are great, they are not inexplicable or jumbled. On the contrary they can be understood as based on adaptations to the larger patterns of Luke-Acts and as coming from transformational strategies which are consistent and coherent - particularly strategies aimed at producing a text which is positive, internalised, christianised, and memorable (repetitive).



The easiest way, therefore, to account for the data is through a straightforward conclusion: Luke, an acknowledged *littérateur*, used a literary method.

What remains unexplained is how Matthew came to have a variation on the same text (Matt 11:2-19). This question is important - but premature; it must wait until further evidence is gathered. Otherwise discussion about it will become lost in a larger inconclusive debate about synoptic relationships in general.

What can be said, however, is that the explanation of Luke 7,18-35 given here, while it is difficult - one has to work with it rather than pull it ready-made out of the air - is also grounded in known scriptural reality. As such it is ultimately more satisfactory and far less conjectural than the appeal to Q.

T. Brodie

### Summary

Luke's interlude concerning John and the vindication of God's wisdom (Luke 7:18-35) depends partly on the interlude which occurs in the Elijah-Elisha narrative concerning Micaiah and the vindication of God's prophetic word. The dependence is shown by context, persistent similarities, and by the coherence and intelligibility of the differences. Luke, however, has given the adapted text a three part structure which fits the pattern of his own narrative, particularly the triple pattern of the miracles, speeches and confrontations of Acts 2-5. The relationship of Luke 7:18-35 to 1 Kings 22 and Acts 2-5 explains it much more reliably than does the appeal to Q.

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## **RENEWED IN THE LIKENESS OF CHRIST: STEPHEN THE SERVANT MARTYR.**

*Clare Amos*

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### **The Feast of Stephen**

There are some saints who seem to have as hard a time of it in death as in life. Take poor St. Stephen: not only was he the first martyr, but he has the continuing misfortune to have his feast fall on the 26th December. The result is that by and large people only remember that Good King Wenceslaus looked out upon it.

That however was not the case in the place where I did my biblical studies: for I had the good fortune to study in Jerusalem at the very place where according to tradition Stephen met his martyrdom. It was called 'the Ecole Biblique', a place where learned French Dominicans who had dedicated their lives to the study of the history and geography of the Holy Land lived and taught. I am grateful to this day for the many insights they gave me. At the Ecole Biblique we celebrated St. Stephen's Day in style, with the cook working overtime. No sooner had he finished serving 50 or more hungry people on Christmas Day, than he had to turn his hand to producing an even more sumptuous repast in honour of our patron saint, St. Stephen. It was the gastronomic highlight of our year.

Ever since those days the figure of Stephen has been one that has intrigued me, even though I sometimes now wonder whether Stephen was a particularly appropriate patron saint for my Dominicans. They were dedicated to the archaeological and historical study of Jerusalem, because it was a holy city, Stephen, on the other hand, was more than a little critical of such things as temples and holy places and paid for it with his life.

Why is it that Stephen is commemorated on December 26? Well, I think I know or can guess the answer - and as you

read on perhaps you will too....and you may find it helpful to have the Acts of the Apostles chapters 6 and 7 open in front of you.

### **Stephen. the first deacon?**

Who and what exactly was Stephen? He is called a 'Hellenist' probably meaning that he was a Jew whose family lived in the Greek Diaspora away from Palestine. Traditionally he has been regarded as one of the first 'deacons', though Luke doesn't actually use the word 'διάκονος' to describe Stephen in this passage. He does however use words that come from the same Greek stem, 'διακονία' and 'διακονέω', to describe what Stephen was commissioned to do, namely wait at tables. Luke sometimes seems to sit astride a fairly uneasy fence: he is keen on order and hierarchy, on things done properly, with the apostles firmly in command and all other forms of ministry deriving from them. So he would like to fit Stephen into a nice unified pattern of ministry, a 'deacon' appointed by and subject to, the apostles. Yet Luke is also honest enough to let us see that this wasn't altogether how it was in the early church: it was all much more messy, and disorganised, and there was about as much bickering around as any spirit of unity.

In fact it must have been a really good bicker that led to Stephen's commissioning, because the split between the Hellenists and Hebraists may have been focused on food but was actually about something much deeper - the differing attitudes to the temple held by the two parties. So often an apparently trivial matter can act as a catalyst for more deep-seated feelings.

Luke is probably intending to suggest to us that Stephen was a deacon - yet he then makes it clear that Stephen notably didn't only deal with the domestic details like deacons were supposed to. Rather he also spent his time preaching and



doing signs and wonders - doing the very jobs that the apostles considered their own - only rather more effectively!.

### **A radical saint?**

Stephen then seems to have extended the boundaries of his job as a 'deacon', and perhaps he may provide a useful role model for those, particularly women, who would also like to extend the boundaries of the roles that the church allots to them. His story suggests the possibility of using the structures of the church responsibly yet creatively to develop a ministry that is apostolic as well as that traditionally allotted to a deacon. In some sense Stephen might even be described as subversive, but if this is so then for people to be subversive like Stephen is very important - for it seems clear that he was the first to preach the gospel to groups well beyond the small inner circle of the Jerusalem Church.

Yet to be subversive is also dangerous: not only can you offend those outside the Christian community, but you risk courting unpopularity from those within. Luke betrays a certain embarrassed reticence as regards the apostolic lack of support for Stephen in his eventual predicament: I really do doubt if Stephen was particularly *persona grata* to Peter or James.

There is also another hazard in subversion: it can sometimes turn into destruction, not least of the soul of the individual concerned. Bitterness and anger can become a self-consuming fire.

But the ultimate pattern for Stephen's subversiveness is none other than Christ himself. One cannot sound much more subversive of the ordering of traditional society than the words of Jesus: 'The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them: and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you....Let your leader be one who serves: which is the greater, one who sits at table or one who serves?'

Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves....'(Luke 22 25-2,) . And once again words from the same Greek stem as 'diakonos' (translated as 'serve') appear, in fact three times in this passage. In other words the model for those who would seek to exercise a Christian ministry that does not totally conform to the expected norms is no longer merely Stephen, but Christ himself.

### **In the image of Christ**

But can you really separate the two? One of the intriguing features of Luke's presentation of the passion of Stephen is that again and again resonances of the passion of Christ appear. Both commit up their spirit, both pray for their persecutors to be forgiven. And the charge brought by false witnesses against Stephen - that he never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law - is almost verbatim the accusation with which Jesus himself is arraigned in Mark and Matthew, though fascinatingly not in Luke. It is as though Luke is saying that the clash of God's love and forgiveness and passion for justice with the self-seeking and enmity of the world which had been seen in such a sharp focus in the suffering and death of Christ, is now being given a new prism through which it is refracted in the person of Stephen. The injunction to disciples to be imitators of Christ is not just a pious metaphor, but has become a matter of life - and death.

I use the language of sight and vision quite deliberately, for I have long been intrigued by the final words of chapter 6; 'And gazing at Stephen all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel' (Acts 6:15) Surely a very curious thing for such a hostile group to see. Somehow it must belong together with the report that Stephen himself, as he was being stoned, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God. It seems that the word 'gaze' is a particular favourite of St. Luke: for other than Luke it only appears twice in the New

Testament in Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians. And Luke likes to use the word to describe situations where the normal boundaries between heaven and earth are breached, and humanity and divinity become strangely intermingled.

The more one studies the Acts of the Apostles, the more one realises how extraordinarily rich the book is in resonances from the Old Testament and the life of Christ: I am sure that Stephen's angelic face is intended to recall for us both the transfiguration of the face of Christ on the mountain, and through that lead us back towards the famous Old Testament story of the shining light on Moses' face seen by the Israelites after he had talked with God. (Exodus 34:29-35). And if Moses and Christ are indeed the model it has some very important things to say to us about the work and ministry of Stephen.

### **Reflecting the presence of God**

Why was it that Moses' 'face shone'? It happened because the Israelites had committed the great sin of the golden calf and God had wanted to destroy them: Moses pleaded for his people, taking on an angry God, even at the threat of his own life. He won a reprieve but then there came the question as to whether God could remain present with such a sinful people: would they not be consumed since humanity cannot easily see God and live. Once again Moses pleads their cause - and the shining on his face as he comes down the mountain is the answer. He has so lost himself in his concern for those to whom he ministers that he is now the answer to his own prayer and has become the means by which God is enabled to be present with them.

So with Stephen: in his shining face we experience a ministry in which God is present, a life in which with unveiled face he has gazed upon and begun to reflect the glory of the Lord. The vision of God which he has seen and will see has



already begun to renew and transform him into the likeness of Moses and Christ, into a figure who loses himself that he may be refashioned to share in the suffering of the Son of Man. Surely an awesome model for all of us: and yet it is true that unless our glimpse of the vision of God can begin to change us and through us the world it is a vision too dangerous for us to behold.

There is a certain irony, in view of the current debates about the priesthood and whether women can really 'represent' Christ, in the fact that it is Stephen, a mere deacon, who is presented in the New Testament as the truest reflection of the likeness of Christ. Yet that is clearly how it is.

### **The face of God**

Several strands help to shape my Christian beliefs and spirituality: but increasingly a core theme for me is that of the face God, a face not merely to be seen in a mystical vision, but which we ourselves must seek to reflect and which is elusively present in so many of the human faces that we encounter. And if like Stephen we begin to reflect something of God, we may begin to be amazed by its power to transform not only our own lives, but also those of others.

Perhaps the words with which Jesus greeted Paul on the Damascus Road suggest something of this: for Paul, who had never met the earthly Jesus in his lifetime, was questioned: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute ME?' - and at that moment he must suddenly have realised that in slaying Stephen he, Paul, had shared in the slaying of Christ himself. So somehow Stephen's identification with Christ has become complete, and because it is so Paul is converted and through him ultimately the Gentile world: a deacon has died and so many others will have life.

### **The face of my neighbour**

But perhaps, just perhaps, the most important conversion that Stephen effects is not of the Gentiles, but of the Church itself. Why was it that Stephen and the others were chosen? Because, said the apostles 'It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.' (Acts 6:2) Don't you think that Luke was wryly aware of those earlier words of Jesus: 'Which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am with you as one who serves.' Don't you think that he was telling us that once again Peter was putting his foot in it, once again those apostles had something to learn, something that Stephen and the other deacons had to teach them. Somehow the heavens that Stephen sees open as he dies lead the way to the open heaven that Peter glimpses in his vision at Joppa as he has to fight to overcome his traditional prejudices and meet with Gentiles. One of those, who could not serve tables, has now become hungry, and as a result of his hunger finally shares food, eats and drinks, not only with Christ, but also with Cornelius and the family of a Roman soldier.

Is it then only as the church learns about humanity and service that it can share the vision of God and become truly apostolic?

*Clare Amos*

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**I HAVE MORE UNDERSTANDING THAN ALL MY TEACHERS. A SERMON PREACHED AT A COMMUNION SERVICE, BRITISH NEW TESTAMENT CONFERENCE, ST ANDREWS, SATURDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 1993.**

*Rev. Professor J. C. O'Neill*

Perhaps you as students have used my text. We teachers all have students who are saying under their breath the words of Psalm 119. 99 as they listen to us teaching:

I have more understanding than all my teachers:  
for thy testimonies are my meditation.

Our first reaction is annoyance. We say back (under our breath), You don't know very much, and you understand less. You can't read Greek and Hebrew at all well yet, and you do not understand half the difficulties of holding your position. True.

Our second reaction (out aloud, perhaps). Let us have a truce. I am not going to tell you what I believe but there are some things you don't know that I can teach you. I'll show you the difficulties of holding (say) the doctrine of the Incarnation, and how you may get round them if you wish to believe it. This is a strict separation of Faith from Knowledge.

You might go on to disclose something of your own faith and say to the students: It is good that you meditate on God's precepts. I do, too. You may well have got further in discipleship than I have. But here we are, like historians and anthropologists, trying to understand from outside. This detachment is not just a device to preserve peace in a secular university. This detachment is a necessary part of the understanding the Psalmist is talking about. Job examined the comfort of his comforters for adequacy. No one can distinguish hypocrisy from true piety without comparing the evidence in words with the evidence in deeds. You can't obey



a command if you can't understand its meaning. What does 'Judge not!' mean?

We cannot deny that the connection of knowledge to faith holds dangers for faith. Our scholarly work can lead us to think we have discovered insuperable barriers to believing in the God in whose presence this meditation is conducted. Yet our scholarly work can discover that the path is in fact clear of obstacles. Our scholarly work may make it harder or easier to meditate on God's testimonies. Or so we think.

We may be wrong in our knowledge. Dr Johnson, needled by Boswell, said 'All theory is against the freedom of the will; all experience for it.' (AD 1778) He knew that all the best arguments of his day were against free will and moral responsibility but he stuck to all experience, and went on believing in free will. The one who meditated on God's testimonies was in fact cleverer than all his teachers. We now know that Dr Johnson was right and the philosophers of his day wrong.

The text must be taken seriously. 'I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation' is the organizing principle of all knowledge. The centre must hold. This centre is accessible to everyone. Teachers need it more than anyone, and if they miss it, they are lost.

The saying is not an attack on teachers as such. The writer of the prayer is of course also teaching us, who read his prayer and repeat it. 'I have more understanding than all my teachers' means, If my teachers fail to meditate on God's testimonies then the student who does has more understanding than they. The path of faith is open to everyone. Once you see the goal, it is dumb not to take the road. And anyone can see.

Teachers who should meditate on God's testimonies can so easily stop meditating. It is fatally easy for the clever

teacher to be so fascinated by the subject-matter that the meditating on the testimonies gets forgotten.

Henry Chadwick used to say, 'An historian is someone who is always talking about important questions without ever asking them.' We may add: A theologian is someone who is always asking important questions without ever walking by the light that is given.

Indeed Jesus almost made it sound as though God was playing games with us clever teachers.

I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.

That is an awful thought. The clues God has given to humanity are the sort that the wise and the calculating easily miss because of their cleverness and the sort the child-like can see more easily.

Melchizedek, king of Salem, has brought forth bread and wine. He is ready to bless us, as we go on our journey from Ur to the new Jerusalem. Let us come as hungry children to the feast. We have meditated on thy testimonies and are ready; we need this food and drink.

*Rev Professor J. C. O'Neill*

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Isaacs, Marie E, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. JSNT Supplement Series 73 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992) ISSN: 0143-5108: No 73.

The last fifteen years have seen a considerable number of good commentaries being written on the Epistle to the Hebrews (usually as part of a series on the whole of the New Testament) and we are promised some more before the end of the century. This good fortune, however, has not been matched by the number of monographs that have been produced. It is to the great credit of Sheffield JSOT Press that in the past three years they have produced three important monographs on the Epistle, Lehne, S, *The New Covenant in Hebrews*. JSNT Supplement 44. (Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), Scholer, J. M, *Proleptic Priests. Priesthood in the Epistle to the Hebrews*. JSNT Supplement series 49 (Sheffield JSOT, 1991) and Isaacs, Marie E, *Sacred Space: An Approach to the Theology of the Epistle to the Hebrews*. JSNT Supplement Series 73 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992).

Dr Isaacs is in line with most modern commentators when she stresses the homiletic nature of the Epistle, where the paranetic sections and theological sections are clearly integrated. She considers that it was written to Jewish Christians, who have failed to see that the Jewish Scriptures testify to the work and person of Jesus as Melchizedekian high priest, and who therefore have not found in those Scriptures the encouragement they need at this time when their faith is flagging and their confidence in God's purpose is on the wane (p. 30). This had not always been the case, rather they had lost their initial enthusiasm. She rejects the commonly assumed notion that this loss of enthusiasm was due to persecution, rightly pointing out that persecution was in the past, though she does not discuss at length the possibility that the lessening of enthusiasm could have been due to the fear of future persecution, a losing of nerve in the face of future

difficulties. She also rejects the commonly held view that the recipients were in Rome or that the Epistle had its origins in Rome (p. 37) and the less popular one that it had a Qumran origin. As regards date she refutes suggestions that the lack of mention of the destruction of the temple must mean that it was written before that time, (43) but would argue for a post- CE 70 date. She wisely rejects all attempts to give a name to the author, but attempts to draw a profile of him: well educated in the Hellenistic mould, Greek-speaking to such a proficiency that it is unlikely he comes from Palestine where Greek would have been a second language, influenced by *both* Middle Platonism *and* Jewish Apocalypticism.

What then is the purpose which the author had in mind when writing his sermon? Dr Isaacs argues that the author inherited a view of 'sacred space' that identified it with the land, Jerusalem, Zion and the sanctuary, i.e. entry into the Promised Land and entry into the inner *sanctum* and the covenant and priesthood upon which these two means of access are based.(p. 62). In Hebrews, however, the early temple and the holy land are superseded by Heaven itself and Jesus himself is both the victim and officiant who has entered Heaven. He is 'working in a promise-fulfilment schema, whereby the cult has been displaced because the purposes for which it was ordained, the removal of the barrier of sin which precluded access to God, had now been fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ, himself at once the perfect victim and priest' (p. 66) This concern with sacred space, however was not born *ex nihilo* , but 'our author seems to have faced some situation which would give rise to a need to return to the established theme of sacred space, and to reinterpret from a Christian view point Judaism's beliefs about the God-given means of access to it.' (p. 62) This situation Dr Isaacs suggests was the destruction of the Temple in C.D. 70.



Dr Isaacs marshalls a considerable amount of evidence for her thesis and in doing so provides the reader with a very clear and careful exposition of many important passages in the Epistle. She deals particularly with land and Rest, the Temple cult and priesthood, the Mosaic Torah and the Sinai Covenant, all previous God-given means of access and then concentrates on the new, definitive means of access, Jesus, with a final chapter on the Role of Psalm 110 and the Exaltation of the Son, the Pre-existence of the Son and the Eschatological Goal to which the People of God are going .. Heaven.

The difficulty about any book on Hebrews which attempts to subsume the whole Epistle under a single thesis, is that there simply is not enough evidence to prove that that is the only possible thesis under which the book can be subsumed. All one can do is provide a grid against which the Epistle is read and see if it makes sense. The grid of 'sacred space' against which Dr Isaacs reads the book, does make sense of most of it, but it is not the only grid possible, and Dr Isaacs does not attempt (wisely in my view) to show that it is the only possible grid.

Dr Isaacs has succeeded in writing a very readable book, one which, though it might not be the 'book of the lectures', which she mentions in the Preface, will nevertheless be of great help to theological students trying to come to grips with Hebrews for the first time. At the same time, she has provided scholars with a stimulating thesis, one which will be debated in the literature for a long time to come.

*J. C. McCullough  
Belfast.*

H. R. Sefton, *John Knox - An account of the development of his Spirituality*, St. Andrews Press, 1993. £5.95.

Ian Ker, *Healing the wound of humanity - The Spirituality of John Henry Newman*, Darton, Longman and Todd. £7.95.

Spirituality is a word widely used to-day and it seems to indicate how the life and thought of Christians are shaped by their beliefs about God, by their habits of study and prayer, and by the circumstances in which they live.

The two figures dealt with in these two books had very little in common, one finding his vocation in rebellion against the teaching and authority of the Church of Rome and becoming the architect of the reformed Church of Scotland, the other having found his way by submission to the teaching and the authority of the Church of Rome after a life as a distinguished preacher in the Church of England.

Sefton traces the life of Knox. In the sixteenth century he rebelled against the teaching and practice of the Church of Rome as he met it in Scotland. They were contrary in many ways to the teaching which he found in the Bible. His convictions were strengthened by a stay in Geneva where he absorbed the teaching of Calvin. He became a preacher with power to expound and apply the teaching of the Bible; he roused his hearers to adore the glory and grace of God and moved them to call for reform. Sometimes this turned to violence. Some have seen him as a domineering demagogue; others have seen him as 'that extraordinary man of God' consumed by a passion for the glory of God who is both Judge and Redeemer. His redemptive purpose was revealed and accomplished through Jesus Christ. His favourite passage in the Bible was John 17; here he saw both the wonder that God should elect even one sinner for salvation and the union which binds disciples to one another and to their Lord. Strong as was his emphasis upon God's electing grace, he could also preach

with fervour that no penitent sinner need despair of receiving mercy.

Sefton backs up all these points by a judicious collection of extracts from Knox's writings.

Ker has already written a fine biography of Newman and he sees Newman's spirituality in terms of his reasons for belief in God and in his view of the main Christian doctrines. The foundation of belief was found, first, in the existence of conscience and a sense of moral obligation which pointed to a supreme Ruler and Judge, and, second, in the sense of personal unfulfilment and sinfulness which looked for something or some one to give life meaning and purpose; this led to God who alone is sufficient to meet our need. This sufficient help comes to us in Jesus Christ; as we read the Gospels we become soaked in the one in whom the cure for our need is now available. The teaching of the Church is the way of expressing the teaching of the Bible and bringing home to us who Christ is and what he has done and is doing. It points us to meet with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in worship and obedience. For Newman this became increasingly the worship centred in the Roman Catholic Church whose churches had for him a sense of the sacramental presence of Christ not found in other churches. He also took the definite Roman Catholic line that justification by faith is not only the act by which God counts believers as righteous in his sight through the merits of Christ, but is also a process by which believers themselves become righteous and renewed within the Church. Nevertheless, the Church, like all societies, has marks of corruption; indeed, it is even more obvious that in other societies; 'evil floats to the top' and is all the more noticeable in a society which professes to have new and divine life in it. The wheat and the tares must grow together. Newman has a tortuous point when he claims that while there are more Roman Catholics than Protestants in the world their corruption



will be more obvious than among Protestants, but this, he thinks only proves that the Church of Rome is the rightful Church! Christians are called to constant repentance and self-denial as servants of Jesus Christ. This will mean the doing of daily duty especially in relation to those with whom they live and work and this will go on until the judgement after death when the record of each life will be unrolled; to see that record in the presence of the Judge will be hell for the impenitent; for the penitent, it will be the awesome presence of the light of heaven.

Here, then, are two great figures who lived in very different worlds of belief and practice here on earth and yet both professing to be servants of the one lord, Jesus Christ. These two books will help readers to assess afresh their strengths and weaknesses and to note the convictions which divided and still divide the Churches in which they lived, worked and worshipped.

*R. Buick Knox.*

Roger Grainger, *Change to Life -- The Pastoral Care of the Newly Retired*. Darton, Longman and Todd. 1993. £7.95. 161pp.

A book on *retirement* from work may seem unrelated to Biblical studies. A book on *change* sounds chords which ring from Genesis to Revelation. The value of this book lies largely in its providing many illustrations of how Biblical accounts of change to life are illuminated by considering what happens to persons as they experience loss of their regular occupation and are faced with entirely new areas in which to offer their gifts and skills and grow as persons within the Body of Christ. The author served for two years as a hospital chaplain, retired two years ago and since has served as a non-stipendiary minister. He was once an actor, still having some parts on television. He is able to pass on case histories in



which are illustrated the nature of work, positions of power and authority, personal identity and self-worth (or lack of it), the corporate setting in which individuals essentially function, using the insights of behavioural sciences and Biblical theology. 'This book' Grainger claims, 'is about helping people to cope with the emotional effects of a particular kind of change ... becoming retired from doing a particular job for a number of years.' Whereas practical points arising with retirement are reviewed in an appendix (such as health, housing, finance, social relations, use of time, etc.) and details given of books and addresses as resources for further reference, the bulk of the book is concerned with what is not usually covered in 'retirement courses' and we are shown how relevant Christian understanding of the human person gives meaning both to life's normal relationships and to the severing of one of these in the transition from one's usual work to an unknown new situation: 'separation' - 'transition' and 'reincorporation.'

The author is well acquainted with the literature on death and dying which has so proliferated in the past twenty years. He therefore regards retiring as a 'little death.' So instead of encouraging the bereaved to by-pass their feelings and take the bridge over them, he knows that these must be 'worked through'. The proper metaphor is not a *bridge* over the troubled waters but a *ford* on which one may pass with due care and observation, well aware that the waters are disturbed. Dealing with exercise of power and authority, whether one has these in work to exercise or comes under their effect, Grainger draws on Bible teaching about 'the powers' at the same time as he cites sociologists like Peter Berger, to show how institutions are set up by people to protect one from another and then find how oppressive these can also become. It would be interesting to look at Walter Wink's *Unmasking the Powers* and *Naming the Powers* to throw further light on how 'our

fight is not against human foes, but against cosmic powers, against the authorities and potentates of this dark world, against the superhuman forces of evil in the heavens.' This gives a dimension unusual in counselling on a merely psychological plane. The resources of faith and doctrine are made available as is becoming so much more common now in pastoral care and counselling.

Since it is at moments of change in personal experience that pastoral care may be sought and best understood, a book like this throws much light on the feelings aroused by redundancy, ageing and especially unemployment with its attendant hopelessness. Depths have to be plumbed to identify both evil and good forces.

A book wholly to be recommended both to pastoral and Biblical students.

*James R. Boyd.*